

Andru Volinsky,
Executive Councilor for District Two
Meeting Report
Executive Council Meetings of March 8 and 22, 2017

This is a combined report about two Council meetings. My report of the March 8th meeting is delayed because of a bout with a bad cold and a difficult schedule. My apologies. Please feel free to contact me at Andru.Volinsky@nh.gov.

Council Agenda Items of Note

The Council breakfast preceding the March 8th Council meeting was hosted by Councilor Pappas at the New Hampshire Department of Corrections. The Council received a presentation about the DOC's drug sniffing dogs and an explanation of the DOC's efforts to address the infiltration of drugs into the state's prison system. The efforts are focused on visitor-to-inmate contacts which has a side effect of more strenuously separating inmates from their children, spouses and significant others. Less attention was directed to other means by which drugs enter the prison. The DOC also provided the Council with an update on the progress of building and opening the new women's prison. The physical plant is likely to be completed in September 2017. Unfortunately, the hiring of additional security staff will not be completed until much later. My sense is security staff will not be hired and trained until 2018. Programming staff will not be hired until after the security staff members are hired.

The March 8th Council meeting included a number of items that sought approvals for the costs of training state employees or reimbursing state employees for training that was completed. As has been the case at other Council meetings, these items were generally approved on a 4-1 vote, with Councilor Wheeler voting against virtually all training stipends and reimbursements. The Council approved an alcohol and substance abuse program aimed at student athletes as requested by the Department of Health and Human Services. The program is funded entirely by funds from the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and other Drug Prevention, Treatment and Recovery programs. This program was approved 4-1, with Councilor Wheeler dissenting. Finally, I was the lone dissenting vote against receipt of a small grant for a program called, "Operation Stonegarden." I voted against the grant because it included an agreement for our local police and sheriff's offices in the North Country to assist the US Border Patrol with border security.

The Council breakfast preceding the March 22nd Council meeting was hosted by Councilor Wheeler at the new liquor warehouse in Bow. The Council was treated to a tour of the very modern facility and a presentation by Chairman Mollica and his senior staff.

The March 22nd Council meeting included discussion of a contract with Gordon-Darby to continue to provide instrument testing of auto emissions and to allow for the near term electronic issuance of inspection stickers to inspection stations. The discussion about this contract revealed a great deal of disapproval about the Clean Air Act by Councilors Wheeler and

Kenney. The contract, after being held over from the prior meeting, was approved with the votes of Councilors Prescott, Pappas and me.

We also voted approval of a grant for moose research conducted by UNH and approval of a number of contracts that allow for the collection of data and dissemination of best practices concerning our expanded Medicaid program. The Council also considered and approved, by a 4-1 vote, a Business Finance Authority Loan guarantee for a company called Environmental Alternatives, Inc. that is located in Swanzey. Councilor Wheeler voted against the guarantee.

Finally, we approved the continuation of three critically important, but temporary, positions at the state's Liquor Commission. The positions are temporary because of financial limitations imposed by the Legislature. The temporary nature of the positions complicates planning and recruitment efforts by the Liquor Commission.

Attached to this Report, please find descriptions of agenda items relevant to Council District Two sorted by whether the item is one of a statewide scope or concerns the Monadnock Region, the Central Region of District Two which is centered around Merrimack County or the Strafford County portion of District Two.

Nominations and Confirmations

The Council took up the Governor's nomination of Frank Edelblut for Commissioner of Education for a full four year term at its March 22nd meeting. Previously, Mr. Edelblut was confirmed to complete the brief remaining term of Commissioner Barry. Mr. Edelblut was confirmed by a 3-2 vote with Councilor Pappas and I voting against confirmation.

I voted against Mr. Edelblut's confirmation for the reasons previously described. In addition, I stated my concerns that Mr. Edelblut had misled the Council by claiming his view of the job of the Commissioner was merely to implement the policy decisions made by the State Board of Education when, in fact, Mr. Edelblut has taken steps to undermine the State Board. Specifically, Mr. Edelblut withdrew proposed administrative rules approved by the State Board without the Board's knowledge and approval. Mr. Edelblut also appears ready to interfere with a \$22 million project designed to upgrade and renovate the Career Technical Education Center in Rochester. The Rochester project enjoys broad community support, will help the children who receive technical training through the Center, and will create jobs in Rochester. The renovation project has been in planning stages for almost two years and is about to commence. I specifically called the project to the Governor's attention so that he would shoulder some responsibility if his Education Commissioner scuttles the project. Finally, I voted against Mr. Edelblut because he was not forthcoming with respect to his role in secretly funding the Croydon lawsuit in which the State sought to prevent the Croydon School District from diverting public monies to a private school.

The Governor nominated Gordon MacDonald to replace Joseph Foster as Attorney General. A confirmation hearing will be conducted on March 28th at 2p in the Council Chambers.

The Governor submitted numerous nominations for state boards and commissions as follows:

Dana M. Call of Windham to be Director of Accounting Services for the Dept. of Admin Services

Emelia Galdieri of Chichester to be Deputy Banking Commissioner

The following are nominated to the Business Finance Authority board: Stephen M. Duprey of Concord, Matthew H. Benson of Concord, Jeffrey Hayes of Intervale, F. Daniel Henderson of Hancock, Jeremy Hitchcock of Manchester, and Catherine Provencher of Merrimack

Mark C. Armaganian of Concord to be Director of Enforcement for the Liquor Commission

Sanders Burstein, MD of Amherst to join the Medical Review Subcommittee

Alan P. Goode of Manchester to join the Board of Optometry

Greg Woodsum of Weare to join the Physical Therapy Board

Christopher S. Albert of Nottingham and Peter Rowell of Nottingham to join the Board of Septic System Evaluators

James P. Burnett, III of Concord to join the University System Board of Trustees

Spotlight

A. Snow Day

The NH Liquor Commission closed its stores on the afternoon of March 14th due to the snow emergency. Unlike with the previous storm, the effort was coordinated and the safety of employees and customers was given full consideration. The Commission is to be commended.

B. \$15 an Hour

At my request, the Department of Administrative Services began reporting the lowest rates of compensation paid by state vendors to their employees on state projects. This practice has now been adopted by the Department of Employment Security and the Department of Resources and Economic Development. On these two Council agendas, we had only one contract relevant to my concern about vendor compensation of employees.

- Tandy Stephens, Corp. of Concord, which operates the on-site food services concession at the Department of Employment Security pays its lowest paid workers \$11.00/hour and does not offer its employees any benefits.

C. Late Item

We had one late item concerning the award of a contract for non-emergency Medicaid transportation services to the CTS Corporation. The Council agreed to delay consideration of the contract until Tuesday, March 28th to afford the public an opportunity to comment.

Next Meeting

Our next special Executive Council meeting will occur at the State House on March 28, 2017, beginning at 1:30 p.m. We will take up the CTS contract at that time and hold a confirmation hearing about the nomination of Gordon MacDonald to be the Attorney General. Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on April 5th beginning at 10 a.m. The agenda for the meeting will be posted by the Secretary of State on the Executive Council web page late on the preceding Friday afternoon. <http://sos.nh.gov/GC2.aspx>

The Governor is responsible for organizing the Executive Council's informal breakfast, which may be attended by the public. It will begin at 8 a.m. at a location to be determined.

From the March 8, 2017 meeting:

Monadnock Region:

[#20](#) Authorized to enter into a **sole source** agreement with the NH Interscholastic Athletic Association Inc., Concord, NH, to implement Life of an Athlete programs with NH students, in an amount not to exceed \$500,000. Effective July 1, 2017 or upon G&C approval, whichever is later, through June 30, 2019. **100% Other Funds (Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery). Vote 4-1 (Wheeler)**

Strafford Region

[#49](#) Authorized a loan agreement with the City of Rochester, NH, in the amount not to exceed \$540,000 to finance water system improvements. Effective upon G&C approval. **100% Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund Repayment Funds. Unanimous Vote**

From the March 22, 2017

Monadnock Region

[#6](#) Authorized to hold a Public Hearing to approve an award of a State Guarantee under RSA 162-A:13 with respect to a loan from The Provident Bank to Environmental Alternatives, Inc. located in Swanzey, New Hampshire. Action will Authorized a Resolution under RSA 162-A:18 to determine the financing will serve a public use, provide public benefit and is within the policy and authority of the Act. **Vote- 4-1 (Wheeler)**

[#25A](#) Authorized, on behalf of the NH Veterans Home, to enter into a **sole source** contract with EDP Software Ltd., Vancouver, BC, Canada, to provide access to a nurse scheduling application for the NH Veterans Home, in the amount not to exceed \$68,400. Effective upon G&C approval through January 31, 2020. **100% Other (Agency Class 027 Funds: the agency class 27 used by NHVH to reimburse DoIT for the contract with 28.17% General, 35.92% Federal, 35.91% Other Funds. Unanimous Vote**

Strafford Region

[#C.](#) FAuthorized to amend an existing **sole source** Cooperative Project Agreement with the University of NH (originally approved by G&C on 7-24-13, item #38), to conduct a research project in support of moose management by extending the project end date from December 31, 2018 to June 30, 2020 at no additional cost to the state. **100% Federal Funds. Unanimous Vote**